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HOUSE RESOLUTION 284  
By Brooks

A RESOLUTION to commemorate the ancestors of the Murden Family.

WHEREAS, it is appropriate that this General Assembly should honor those ancestors of African American families, who serve as the backbone by which our great nation stands strong and proud; and

WHEREAS, in 1997, Roland Johnson was selected to document the history of the Murden Family of Chattanooga; and

WHEREAS, the Murden family began on November 9th, 1917 in Cartersville, Georgia, when Benjamin Murden, who was born on October 2, 1886 and died on March 5, 1951, and Maude Redwine, who was born on September 23, 1889 and died on March 2, 1979, were united in marriage; and

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WHEREAS, there were ten children born to this blessed union; Benjamin and Maude Murden's children were, Mary Louise Murden Brown, born on February 7, 1908 (deceased); Alice R. Murden Brown, born on May 25, 1911; Raymond Murden, born on August 4, 1914; Thelma Murden, born on June 27, 1916 (deceased); Daisey Murden Lackey, born on July 31, 1918; Mildred Murden Johnson, born on February 11, 1922 (deceased); Olga Murden James, born on September 19, 1924 (deceased); Margaret Murden Havis, born on March 3, 1926; Mary Kathryn Murden Dorsey, born on March 3, 1928; and Theodore R. Murden, born on February 28, 1931 (deceased); and

WHEREAS, shortly after the birth of their fourth child, Benjamin and Maude Murden moved their family from Atlanta, Georgia, to Chattanooga, where they had six more children; the Murdens remained in Chattanooga until all their children were adults, and then moved to Kankakee, Illinois, where two of their children, Daisey and Mary Kathryn, were residing; and

WHEREAS, at the time of her death, Mrs. Maude Murden had nine surviving children, 28 grandchildren and 45 great-grandchildren; and

WHEREAS, beyond that blessed union are the African ancestors of Benjamin Murden and the indigenous American ancestors of Maude Redwine; and

WHEREAS, many Africans were defeated in battles with other ethnic groups of African descent, who in turn sold the prisoners of war to European slavers; and

WHEREAS, the European slavers would march the captured Africans to slave castles located along the coast of West Africa, known as the Gold Coast; and

WHEREAS, in the slave castles, the captured prisoners of war were thrown in dungeons to await shipment as human cargo to the western hemisphere, where they would be assessed, examined and taxed as goods and property before being displayed for sale on the slave auction blocks of the Caribbean and Americas; and

WHEREAS, the shipment as human cargo was a three-to-four month voyage known as the Middle Passage, and the trade in which these voyages occurred is referred to as the Atlantic Slave Trade; and

WHEREAS, the Atlantic Slave Trade occurred for approximately 400 years, from 1441-1860; and

WHEREAS, once in the bowels of the slave ships, the captured Africans were stored on an extra floor added in the cargo compartment of the vessels; and

WHEREAS, in the decks, the predecessors of the present-day Murden Family were chained together at the ankles, wrists, and around the neck with weights suspended from chains to deter any captives who might try to flee; and

WHEREAS, on the upper deck of the slave ship, the enslaved Africans, who were referred to as "black gold" because of their value to wealthy Europeans, were allowed to spend approximately one hour a day outside for exercises, but otherwise had to spend the entire Middle Passage Voyage stuffed into the below deck dungeons; and

WHEREAS, as a group, the captured Africans were doused with stinging, salty ocean water as a bath, even when they had open sores and wounds from being flogged; and

WHEREAS, there are not enough words in the English language to describe the suffering that our ancestors experienced during the Middle Passage, and during slavery in the Americas and Caribbean; and

WHEREAS, the captured Africans who gave rise to the Murden family were forced to eat and release excrement in the spots where they lay; and

WHEREAS, many Africans died during the Middle Passage Voyage due to pestilence, suicide, or murder at the hands of the cruel European slavers; and

WHEREAS, as many as one-third to one-half of the victims of the Middle Passage died, and another one-third died within the first year of arriving in the Western world, due to the harsh winters and exposure to European diseases such as smallpox and scurvy; and

WHEREAS, ancestors of the Murden family were packed in the middle decks of slave ships, where captives prior to 1802 were stacked on top of one another like logs to maximize profit for the European slavers and to compensate for the high numbers of Africans expected to be lost to death before arrival in the Americas; and

WHEREAS, it is the responsibility of those in the modern-day Murden family to behave honorably and responsibly, in order that Ancestors' deaths are not in vain; and

WHEREAS, all of the European world powers eventually participated in the Atlantic Slave Trade and were led by the Portuguese, who stole the first Africans from the continent in 1441 to provide free labor on plantations in Hispaniola off the coast of the Americas; and

WHEREAS, the importance of slavery into the United States evolved into bondage, which resulted in racist discrimination and mistreatment of Africans based on a difference in the color of their skin from their European oppressors; and

WHEREAS, in addition to the mistreatment of Africans in America, and in the Caribbean, there was the decimation of indigenous Peoples of the western world; and

WHEREAS, Indigenous Americans account for the second part of the Murden heritage, via the lineage of Maude Redwine;

WHEREAS, Africans were chosen to work as slaves in the Americas and the Caribbean because of the indigenous peoples' ability to escape into the wilderness of the familiar territories on which the Europeans attempted to enslave them; and

WHEREAS, indigenous Americans lacked the strength to withstand the duress and pressure under which the Europeans executed their forced slave labor, causing the Europeans to look to other groups such as Africans to employ without fee; and

WHEREAS, one out of every ten slaves-to-be died during the 'breaking in' process, in which the captives were taught how to be slaves; and

WHEREAS, both Africans and indigenous Americans were exposed to European culture, language, morals, and belief systems, that were counter to their own; and

WHEREAS, the European world view imposed upon the Murden's African and indigenous ancestors emphasized that life in bondage would consist of constant toil, the only relief from which was death; and

WHEREAS, two to three generations of Murdens lived and died in the United States under this oppressive system, and untold others were fortunate enough to remain in Africa; albeit in Africa, inhabitants were colonialized by Europeans and exploited to work the lands for precious resources such as gold and copper; and

WHEREAS, the Murden family is eager to learn of any African cousins, uncles, and grandparents still alive on the Continent or in other parts of the African Diaspora; and

WHEREAS, it is imperative to realize that hundreds of indigenous ethnic groups once predominated in the Americas prior to the arrival and invasion of the Europeans; and

WHEREAS, the Indigenous Ancestor of the Murden Family, Maude Redwine belonged to at least one of the hundreds of indigenous ethnic groups of ***Turtle Island***, which is what the indigenous people called the United States; and

WHEREAS, indigenous peoples, just like many African captives, willed themselves to die, rather than allow themselves to be subjected to a life of European chattel slavery; and

WHEREAS, indigenous peoples of the Western world displayed their value and appreciation for a free and higher quality of life in their steadfast refusal to submit to European chattel slavery; and

WHEREAS, the Spaniards were the primary enslavers of indigenous Americans; and

WHEREAS, Indigenous peoples of the Caribbean were exterminated as a result of the exploitation and disease producing contact they had with their European oppressors; and

WHEREAS, as a result of the Europeans' inability to successfully enslave the indigenous peoples of the Western world, more enslaved Africans were sent to South America and the Caribbean than to North America; and

WHEREAS, the Murden's Indigenous ancestors in the Western Hemisphere were exploited for their land, since the Europeans were unable to exploit them physically beyond decimation and pillaging; and

WHEREAS, the price the Indigenous Americans suffered as a result of the theft of their land is analogous to the colonialization of the African continent by Europeans, in that the inhabitants in both cases lost control of their own homelands; and

WHEREAS, Europeans showed little or no respect in usurping the lands of the indigenous peoples of the Americas and Caribbean for their own selfish purposes, and did so under the guise of religious righteousness and Christianity; and

WHEREAS, Europeans brought to the Americas the concept of land ownership and possession, whereas, the Murden's indigenous ancestors believed that land could not be owned by anyone other than God; and

WHEREAS, Indigenous peoples had numerous conflicts with Europeans over their own land, because the European invaders felt entitled to colonialize the Americas, the Caribbean, and the continent of Africa, and claimed to have discovered such lands, despite the existence of peoples on the land masses prior to their arrival; and

WHEREAS, despite the Europeans' now-famous Manifest Destiny, which justified their ravenous need to control, possess and own all land deemed of value to them, and the inhabitants of those lands as well, the Murdens' ancestors survived; and

WHEREAS, this family is thankful for the miracle of survival that its Africans and indigenous American ancestors managed, and this General Assembly joins the Murdens in a celebration of life and respect for those ancestors, who survived insurmountable and inhumane conditions, so that their progeny can flourish and contribute to the fabric of America as we know it today; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE HUNDRED FIRST GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, That we commemorate the

African and indigenous American ancestors of the Murden Family of Chattanooga, and honor those ancestors who died in the Middle Passage, as a result of slavery and so-called "Indian Wars" of the Americas. In remembering this family's past, we must give thanks for the present, eagerly anticipate the future, and conduct our lives in ways that would make our African and Indigenous ancestors proud.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy.